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LENT LECTURES.

REV. G. H. WILKINSON.





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BY

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE following pages contain the substance of the notes taken by a member of the congregation, of Lectures delivered in S. Peter's, Eaton Square, during the Lent of 1871.

They were afterwards expanded into a course of Sermons preached in S. Paul's Cathedral during the Lent of 1873.

For the sake of those who are strangers to the Author's general teaching, it may be well to state that a special course of Lectures on Holy Communion is given every year, in S. Peter's. The omission, in this and other works, of any direct reference to that Holy Sacrament, arises from his wish to concentrate the attention of his hearers on the single object proposed for their consideration.

He ventures to hope that, although originally intended for Lenten teachings, the thoughts contained in these Lectures may be used by GOD the HOLY GHOST in preparing Church-workers for taking an active part in the solemn work to which we have been summoned by the Bishops of the Metropolitan Dioceses;—the London Mission of 1874.

"Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."



LECTURE I.



LET me begin by drawing in broad outline a sketch of the Christian Life, as it has been depicted by the HOLY SPIRIT in the Bible, and confirmed by the experience of GOD's people in every place and generation.

GOD, of His own Free-Will,—simply because He chose to do so,—elected you and me out of all the millions of mankind. When we knew neither good nor evil, and were unable to discern His Love, He, of His own Will, baptized us into the Kingdom of CHRIST, and made each of us “a member of CHRIST, “the child of GOD, and an inheritor of the Kingdom “of Heaven.”

GOD then gave us over to the rest of the Body,—the Church,—and bade His Church to instruct us in Holy Scripture, in order that the HOLY SPIRIT, pledged to us by virtue of our Baptism, might work in us by means of that Word of GOD, and develop in us the conscious Christian Life.

Long before it can understand what GOD has done for it, or what GOD is doing within it, the Christian child, whose course I am describing, becomes the subject of those influences of Divine Grace which are continually circulating through the whole Body. These influences are increasingly felt, as its higher being is developed. And, sooner or later—unless, through the neglect of parents, or through its own self-will, it grows up without instruction in the things of GOD—the HOLY GHOST enables it to realize, for itself,

"the first principles of the doctrine of CHRIST."
(Heb. vi. 1.)

1. *He convinces it of sin.*—He makes that child feel that it has an evil nature, and has been led by that evil nature into definite acts of sin. Under His teaching, the soul learns to say: "I have sinned. I have tried to be good, again and again, and I have failed. My prayers are cold, and full of wandering thoughts. I have no love for GOD. My religion is a burden, not a pleasure. My temper does not improve, in spite of all my efforts. I love my own will and my own way. I have done this and that, which I ought not to have done. I have left undone this and that, which I ought to have done. I have offended against GOD's holy Law."

2. *He reveals the Atonement.*—Gradually, or quickly,—for GOD will not be limited,—in the course of weeks, or months, or sometimes in a single hour; or, in some rare cases, extending the work through years,—the SPIRIT takes the same Holy Scriptures, and reveals to the awakened conscience this glorious fact: "GOD HATH RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF BY JESUS CHRIST." (2 Cor. v. 18.) "These sins," He says, "which thou art beginning to discover, were known to GOD from all Eternity. For them, thy SAVIOUR has atoned. Past, Present, and Future, are equally present to GOD. He knew, beforehand, the sins of the whole world. And, knowing that sin had in it a poison which could not be eradicated at less cost, GOD put away sin by the Precious Blood of His Dear SON. He laid the sin of the world, past, present, and future, on JESUS CHRIST. Behold the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world! Thy debt is paid. He was wounded for *thy* transgressions; He was bruised for *thine* iniquities. The LORD hath laid on HIM

“the iniquity of—ALL. Come into the closeness and nearness of a soul reconciled with GOD, without the shadow of a doubt, and call GOD thy FATHER.”

Thus working on the individual soul, by means of the BIBLE—this is important; not by means of its own transient feelings,—the HOLY GHOST opens its eyes to the great Fact which CHRIST declared on the Cross: “IT IS FINISHED.”

3. *He gains the WILL for GOD.*—He is not satisfied with shewing the soul its own guilt; nor even with shewing it the completeness of its individual salvation. Still working by means of the Bible—bringing the Bible to bear on this individual soul,—he teaches it that there must be Self-Surrender. He points out to the young Christian the absolute claim of GOD upon his whole being. “My son, give me thy heart.” “If ONE died for all, then all died. And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto HIM which died for them, and rose again.” (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)

The order in which these foundation truths are learnt may vary in each separate case, and the means by which the result is attained are likewise manifold. A sermon—a book—the voice of a friend—a Providence—a memory of past years suddenly flashing across the mind, we know not whence—any of these may serve as instruments, to GOD the HOLY GHOST. He points out, it may be, from GOD’S Word, the reality of Hell, with its exceeding terror. Or He draws aside the veil, and shews the glory and beauty of the heavenly Kingdom. Or He reveals the Person of the SAVIOUR—the attractiveness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He unfolds the grandeur of that lonely life—the strength of that stern protest against evil—the tenderness which would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax—which would not

suffer the widow at the gate of Nain to weep one unneeded tear—which could forget His own hunger and thirst, that He might seek, and help, and save the poor sinner of Samaria. He sets forth the constraining Love of those long years of suffering, and of that Death of shame: the pierced Hands—the wounded Side—the Head crowned with thorns.

It matters not how. In some way or other, the HOLY SPIRIT has won that soul for CHRIST. The LORD has been revealed, and it ceases to confer with flesh and blood. Convinced of sin, the young Christian believes in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, receives humbly what CHRIST has done for him, accepts thankfully the blessings of his Baptism, and yields himself up, in the mysterious freedom of his Will, to JESUS CHRIST:—devotes himself entirely to the King whom he has learnt to recognize as the rightful LORD of his being. There is an honest Self-Surrender.

This Surrender is generally very imperfect, at first, like that of the Fishermen of Galilee. But—like theirs—it is true, so far as it goes.

The words used may be few. "LORD, I have been "wavering, all my life: religious, in some society; "worldly, in others: halting between two opinions. "But now, I have made up my mind. I see THEE! "And whatsoever THOU shalt tell me to do,—though "the flesh may resist, and I may have to cry out for "strength to bear my pain,—that I will do. With "that Will which I consciously possess, I give myself "to THEE."

This Recognition of Guilt, and Belief in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and Surrender of the Will—are formally recognized and endorsed by the Church in her Confirmation Service.

Then commences the CONSCIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The soul begins, feebly though it be, to try to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth ; to grow in grace ; to crush, by degrees, one after another, its besetting sins.

Two Results follow.—(I.) It has a greater sense of its own weakness ; it becomes more diffident of itself, more tolerant of others, more ashamed of its own sinfulness.

(II.) Yet, side by side with this humbling discipline, the Saviour is more clearly revealed :—His Love—His Tenderness—His Strength, “made perfect in weakness,” more fully realized. And so, the soul becomes more calm, more peaceful, more able to commit all to Him, “against that Day.” (2 Tim. i. 12.)

Life rolls on. This mingled consciousness increases. And at last, to the aged Christian, if we accept the light of Scripture and the biographies of saints, there comes a twofold experience. There is a physical shrinking—never condemned in the Bible—from the surroundings of death. But, together with this, the Door into Heaven seems to open wider, and the old saint looks through, and sees the faces of those whom he has loved on earth, and beholds more clearly the LORD JESUS CHRIST, The King in His beauty. He tastes beforehand something of the happiness of Heaven, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; where GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. He realizes the Rest and Peace of that happy Land, more than he was ever able to realize it in the days of his strength. There is no regretful looking back to happy days of youth, when he was working, and enjoying life, and influencing others. For him, the joy is yet to come : there,—in Jerusalem which is above !

This is the IDEAL of the Christian's life on earth. But, I appeal to you, is it not a fact, that this ideal is scarcely realized at all among us?

How few, on the threshold of the grave, appear to be really looking forward with joy to the Home beyond! How few find any pleasure in talking of it!

And how few—even of real Christians—from one Lent to another, shew any signs of spiritual progress! How little do we see of growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of GOD;—of “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before!”

How few there are of whom we could say: “He has grown so much more large-hearted; he used to be so narrow!” Or—“She is so much more gentle than she used to be!” Or—“So much more kind and courteous; that old rough manner seems gradually dying out.” Or—even in outward things—“How much less he spends on self! How different the tone of his conversation! How much more of the Spirit of CHRIST does he now carry into his daily work! Though he has not much time for extra work, he is speaking bravely for CHRIST to the men whom he meets every day; praying first, and then going forth in the strength gained by prayer!” How seldom do we observe these signs of growth in grace! Nay, further: how few have any clear knowledge of their position in the sight of God! The mass of Christians seem all in a mist. All that they can say is—they are “not as good as they should be.” They cannot tell whether CHRIST died for them, or not; whether they are forgiven or not! They have only a vague hope that all will be well at last.

These are not careless souls. I am not speaking to any such. All of you are, more or less, in earnest; really wishing to be better. And yet—is it not true?—*two-thirds* of even such a week-day congregation as

this are full of misgivings : not the sort of misgivings which all of us have—and ought to have—about our own carelessness and short-comings,—but misgivings as to whether or no they are really accepted by GOD !

Why is all this ?

One reason is—the want of DEFINITENESS. What I desire, therefore, this Lent, is to help you to be definite.

Ask GOD the Blessed SPIRIT to help me, and to help you ; for Satan will try to hinder us. And do not be content with merely praying, but make an effort.

“ With one hand work, and with the other pray,
And GOD will bless them both, from day to day.”

Begin, then, this first week in Lent, and do something definite. Take Ps. cxxxix. vv. 1-11, and the last two verses : take this, and the story about blind Bartimæus, in the Gospel for last Sunday. (S. Luke xviii. 35-43.)

Set apart a quarter-of-an-hour, *extra*, every day—each of you, except those who already devote all the time that they possibly can devote, to prayer.

Put yourself in the presence of JESUS CHRIST. Try to picture that blind man. JESUS is passing by ; he cries for help. The multitude try to hinder him ; he cries so much the more. Our LORD stands still : HE calls him. Determined to press on, he casts aside his garment. Then the question is asked : “ What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? ” “ LORD,” he answers,—“ LORD, that I may receive my sight.”

Then try to grasp this thought. Perhaps I am blind, like Bartimæus ! I may be quite mistaken as to my own state. I may be on the broad road that leadeth to destruction, while all seems well. I may

be standing still in the spiritual life, or even going back, while my friends think that I am making progress! The LORD JESUS says to *me*: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?"—O LORD, may I receive my sight! Search me, O GOD! Help me to see my own heart, as it appears to THEE! Show me if I have ever believed, in any real sense, in Thee:—whether this Will of mine has ever been really yielded to Thee. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts!

Each day, then, during this week, for a quarter-of-an-hour, on your knees, think over your state before GOD, and pray this Prayer.

If Satan tries to hinder you—if you are tempted to delay—to put off the effort—to persuade yourself that you have not time—that it is impossible—that it is of no use,—this thought may help to strengthen your wavering resolution. Think what it would be, to die *to-night*;—to pass out of this life, and go into the world beyond—to take your seat, boldly, at the Marriage Feast; and then—when the KING came in to see the guests, to find that KING fixing on you His piercing Eye—that Eye from which you will not be able to escape, any more than you and I can really escape it at this moment! And then—to hear Him say: "Friend! Friend! How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?"

May the Blessed SPIRIT make that thought of the Eye of CHRIST—of your JUDGE—so real to you, that Satan shall be powerless to stop your lips, when the cry is going up to GOD, in that quiet quarter-of-an-hour: "SEARCH ME, O GOD!"

LECTURE II.

IN my last Lecture, I tried to set before you God's ideal of the Christian life.

I shewed you (1) that GOD, of His own Free-Will, brought us into the Church of His SON JESUS CHRIST—set His love upon us and chose us; (Deut. vii. 6-8;) so that we have a right to claim for ourselves the help of His HOLY SPIRIT, and have that Blessed SPIRIT actually working within us.

(2.) That GOD has given us the HOLY SCRIPTURES, as the means by which the HOLY GHOST awakens in us a sense of sin, reveals the SAVIOUR, and leads us to yield ourselves to HIM as our rightful LORD and MASTER. In other words—that the HOLY SPIRIT, by means of the BIBLE, convinces the soul, unless it resists His teaching, “of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” (S. John xvi. 8.)

(3.) That when these three Truths have been learnt, and the soul has thus yielded itself, however feebly, to the LORD who bought it, then begins the CONSCIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE; a life which deepens as it flows on, in Penitence—in Trust—in Self-Surrender—until it is perfected in the life of the world to come.

Next, we saw, that one great reason why this ideal is so seldom realized, is this: the want of *definiteness*.

Is it not true? The mass of professing Christians have never learnt to know themselves. They have no idea where they are standing, in the sight of GOD.

All seems vague and misty. Have they realized their sin? Have they believed in the Forgiveness of sins? Do they know the power of the Blood of CHRIST? Have they yielded heart and life to Him? If so, are they growing in grace?—They cannot tell! At best, they are wishing to do right—longing to please GOD, and to carry out the ideal of the Bible in their lives,—but are paralysed through this want of definiteness. Many an earnest soul will tell us: “I try to pray; “I try to please GOD; I use all the appointed means “of grace; but I feel no comfort in my religion; “no happiness, no strength. I hardly know what “would become of me, if I were to die to-night!”

What is the result? A dreary life! Their religion is only a barren duty—a hard and wearing bondage, from which, if it could, the soul would escape.

To the Church, as a Body, the loss is greater still, if possible, than to the individual Christian. “For if “the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. xiv. 8.)

There is a great lack among us, in these days, of brave witnesses for CHRIST. To a certain extent, religion is fashionable. There are plenty of talkers: there is no great lack of workers, nor of devotional books, nor of people who will read them. But what we want is—something more than this. We want *personal witnessing for a personal Saviour*.

We want men and women on whom the Church could depend, as sure to stand bravely on the LORD's side, in whatever society they might be thrown. We want a little band of *Believers*!—of Believers, in the deepest sense: conscious, indeed, of weakness and infirmity; often failing, and confessing their own sinfulness to the end: yet strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might;—living epistles, known and read of all men. (Eph. vi. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 1—3.)

We want people that have a definite object in life :—one end and aim throughout—alike in the dull winter, and in the exciting London Season :—to glorify God, and bear witness for the LORD JESUS CHRIST. (1 Cor. x. 31. S. John xv. 27. Phil. ii. 15, 16 : iii. 13, 14.)

The young married woman, in whose presence the voice of scandal is hushed :—who has courage to protest against the degrading literature that robs so many of their early purity ;—who will say to her friend : “ Forgive me for speaking, but is it *right* to read that book ? ”—or who will gently stop the young girl whom she finds reading some newspaper report, and say : “ My child, you must not read this : it is a shame even to speak of such things.” (Eph. v. 12. Isa. xxxiii. 15. Prov. iv. 14, 15. S. Matt. v. 8.)

The young man, who, when he hears his LORD insulted, in the pleasant country-house where he is staying, will speak out,—not rudely, forgetting all that the Bible says about courtesy, yet bravely and firmly : who will pray silently, when he hears those sinful words, and then—when his opportunity comes,—will lift up his heart afresh to God, and say quietly : “ You know that such a story ought never to have been repeated ; ” or—“ Surely you do not think *that* was the right way of spending Sunday ? ”

Such witnesses, thank God, are still to be found among us. Deep is their influence. Cheering it is, to watch them : so quiet and unobtrusive, yet so ready to speak, when needed !

But why are there so few ? Why are not all of us among their number ? Why is there so much feebleness, and wavering, and inconsistency ?

In many cases, I believe that this arises from a fear—a reasonable and right fear—of hypocrisy.

The soul is ignorant of its own state, and therefore it naturally feels itself unfit to help others.

To counteract this vagueness—in one respect, at any rate, by helping you to gain Self-Knowledge,—is my present aim.

But if, by the aid of the HOLY GHOST, that aim is to be attained, you must co-operate ; you must stir up the gift of God that is in you.

With this end in view, I asked you, in the last Lecture, to spend fifteen minutes, every day, in meditating on the history of Bartimæus, with the help of Ps. cxxxix. ; praying, with Bartimæus, “ LORD, that I may receive my sight ! ”

Many of you will have done this. And some may have tried, and failed, and given it up in despair.

Do not lose heart. Try again. Victory comes after many a defeat. The Soldier of CHRIST rises up again and again, however often defeated : soiled and stained, it may be, with his fall ; yet grasping the same good sword again, and going out once more against the enemy. Rise up, then. Prepare for a struggle. Do not spare yourselves trouble. Make one more effort.

Begin now to take half-an-hour, instead of a quarter-of-an-hour, for this work of Self-Examination. As Lent advances, we ought to be gaining more strength ; we ought to be able to do more.

Take half-an-hour, then, every day. Kneel quietly down. Close your eyes. Try to realize that the Eye of God is upon you ;—that you are alone with that GOD Who has been watching you from infancy to the present hour, and Who knows every thought, word, and deed, of your whole life. Ask GOD the HOLY GHOST to fix your mind on what you are doing.

Try to anticipate the Judgment. Try to see what is written about you in that Book of God's Remembrance, of which He has said that it shall be "opened" in that Day when "we shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST." (Eccl. xii. 14; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xx. 11, 12.) Picture the Great White Throne—the opened Books—the Day when all your secret thoughts shall be published to men and angels! Think of all this, quietly.

Then take pencil and paper; (this is absolutely necessary to beginners, and helpful to all, in Self-Examination;) and try to break up your life into portions:—your childhood, your school-days, &c. Begin with the portion nearest to the present time. From your old age, go back to your middle life; then to youth, and then to childhood.

Be prepared to see nothing, at first, but blanks, or one or two very flagrant sins: but believe that God is there to help you. Pray to Him: "Search me, O GOD! Help me to look into my heart—to see my life as THOU, O GOD, seest it!"

The work will be very slow and imperfect, at first: for Religion, like any other profession, needs practice. Therefore, do not be disheartened.

By degrees, GOD will bring some old sin to your remembrance. Thank Him for having shewn you that one sin. Take courage, and go on. Shut your eyes, and try to surround yourself with your old circumstances—the house, the people, &c. And gradually, by the Law of Association, forgotten sins will come back, and you will be surprised how the list will swell. You will not wonder any more at the striking story of the drowning man, who, as the waves were breaking over him, seemed to hear his mother's voice, saying: "Who stole those grapes?" The memory

evil which has sprung up to trouble you. When you have found out a fresh fault, track it to its source.

For instance: you write down, as the cause of your backsliding, "Neglect of Prayer." But this sin may proceed from various causes:—from indolence, or fear of ridicule; or from a desire to secure more time for amusement, or for intellectual pursuits. Which has it been, in your own case?

Or you think that "Temper" has been your besetting sin. Then ask yourself: "What makes me angry? Why do I give way to temper? Is it because I have such a good opinion of myself, that I think it unjust, whenever I am blamed? Or is it because I live so much on the opinion of others, and long so much to gain their love, that I am annoyed when they say or do anything which looks as if they did not care for me?" In the former case, the root of your ill-temper would be Pride; in the latter, it would be Love of Popularity.

If we do not wish to waste our strength in the spiritual combat, we must know the special form of self with which we have to deal. We may have to search deeply, before we find it. There is a spiritual self, as well as a worldly or carnal self. Satan's devices are manifold, and our own hearts are deceitful. This deep Self-Examination will not be easy work. But it is absolutely necessary, to definite and successful warfare. "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King of Israel." (1 Kings xxii. 31.) "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave." (Josh. x. 22.) "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air." (1 Cor. ix. 26.)

II. *Do not be too ready to acquit yourself.*—Do not hastily say: "This or that sin is not one of *my* sins." Do not toss aside any sentence in God's Word that

may possibly contain a condemnation for your own soul.

For instance : when you heard the Curse of GOD pronounced, in the Communion Service, on him that "maketh the blind to go out of his way," perhaps you said in your heart : "Thank GOD, this, at least, is a sin that I have never committed."

Would to GOD that we could believe it, of all our Communicants !

Have you never led a blind *soul* out of the way, by your influence—your example—your thoughtless deeds—your careless words ? Look at that young girl, ignorant as yet of the glory of Heaven and the love of CHRIST—a poor, blind child, holding out its hand for guidance ! How does many a mother deal with her whom GOD has thus entrusted to her care ? She works for Satan ! She teaches her daughter to spend her strength and time on a world that "passeth away !" She bids her estimate a "good marriage"—a "good husband"—according to the amount of wealth offered, or the size of the estate ; not according to his devotion to GOD. O ye Mothers of London ! How many a blind child have ye caused to go out of her way !

Or again, we read : "Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly :" and we say to ourselves : "A cowardly act ! I would never condescend to anything so mean." And yet—the unkind tale—the disparaging remark—the significant look—the bitter taunt—the wilful wounding of another's feelings—the sharp word in secret—the wicked scandal—by which human hearts are crushed, and characters destroyed, and homes made miserable !—Where is the street in which a neighbour is not thus smitten, secretly, every day ?

Again : "All Liars shall have their part in the

lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." (Rev. xxi. 8.) Are we sure that our own character is not here described? Can we fearlessly bring to the light of GOD'S Word all those "tricks of trade"—and of "Society"—which the world approves?

Remember the King who heard the history of his own sin from the Prophet's lips, and listened to it just as many good people in these days listen to an arousing sermon, hoping that it will do good to—some one else!—Thou poor blind David! "THOU art the man!" (2 Sam. xii. 1—7.)

Be more ready to say: "LORD, is it I?"—than to thank GOD that you are not as other men are. (S. Luke xviii. 10—15.)

In conclusion :

Do not let Satan dishearten you.—Be strong, and of a good courage. Satan will try hard. Meet him bravely.

The Enemy is never more near, than when he sees us in earnest about Self-Examination. When he cannot persuade us that GOD'S warnings about the "Judgment to come" have nothing to do with "Believers," and that all teaching which bids us examine ourselves, &c., is mere "bondage," then he tries another plan. He says to us: "It is useless, now. You are lost. You have gone too far. You have sinned the unpardonable sin. You cannot fix your thoughts on GOD, now. You cannot feel, or think, or pray. Give it up!"

Do not listen to Satan. "He is a liar, and the father of it." (S. John viii. 44.) Your case is *not* hopeless. The HOLY GHOST is *not* yet quenched. How could you have any wish to be better, if He had left you to yourself? Throw back

the lie in Satan's face. Answer him, by the Promise of your LORD: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." (S. John. vi. 37.) "It is GOD which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.)

You are not alone, in the struggle. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man." (1 Cor. x. 13.) These temptations are only what many others—unknown to you—are passing through with you: they are only such as all must experience, in some measure, who try to commune with their own hearts and search out their spirits. Do not lose heart. Others have gone through this darkness before you, and passed out into light and liberty. "GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

Think of the Love of JESUS! Your Clergyman can sympathize with you, in the struggle: he knows how hard it is for you. But there is ONE Who can give you deeper sympathy; ONE Who has loved you from the beginning, and marked you for His own at your Baptism:—ONE Who has been pleading with you all your life long: even that Good SHEPHERD who "goeth into the mountains," to seek the one sheep that has gone astray. (S. John xv. 16; Haggai ii. 5; S. Matt. xviii. 12.) His Eye of Love is resting upon you; His Right Hand is laid on you—whether you feel it or not—during that quiet time alone with Him, day by day.

He knows the difficulties of this Self-Examination. He is stronger than Satan. He has conquered the Enemy for you. He died for you, and rose again; and He loves you too well to forsake you in this time of need.

Be strong, then! Be strong, and of a good courage.

It is the LORD your God who goeth before you. Thank Him for what He has done for you already. Thank Him that He is not allowing you to spend this Lent carelessly, whatever may have been the case in past years. Be thankful unto Him for the Past. Trust Him for the Future. Persevere ! And yours shall be a bright and glorious Easter !

LECTURE III.

I TAKE it for granted that those of you who have been travelling with us through the stony paths of Self-Examination have now attained to something like a definite knowledge of Self.

You have searched into the Past : very imperfectly, no doubt, but honestly, as in the sight of GOD. You have discovered certain sins on which you can lay your hand ; and you have confessed those sins to GOD. However little sorrow for sin may have been felt, the fact has been acknowledged : "I have sinned—against the LORD." (2 Sam. xii. 13 ; Josh. vii. 20 ; Ps. li. 3, 4 ; S. Luke xv. 21.)

Following on this will come Contrition, and Amendment. But there is a starting-point from which we begin thus to mourn for sin and to walk in newness of life. And I have great doubts whether all of you have as yet reached that starting-point. "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD !"

Some of you have done this already. You are now mourning for your sins with true contrition of heart ;—mourning, because those sins have pierced your SAVIOUR. (Zech. xii. 10 ; Isa. liii. 5.) Help us by prayer—you that have thus learnt the blessing of going back every night for Pardon to Him Who delights most in helping us, when we are most helpless. Pray that those who are yet captives may be set free, by the power of the HOLY GHOST.

With many of you, the whole result of Self-Examination, as yet, is a miserable feeling of dissatisfaction.

You look back, and you see nothing but sins—more or less grievous; broken promises, lost opportunities, a wasted life. You look within, and you find a mist—a darkness which may be felt. You look forward. It is a dreary Future! You fear to face it.

So you fly to the world—to business, pleasure, the society of friends, or even idle gossip—anything—to escape from self and from thoughts of Judgment to come. Or—if saved from this folly—you sink into a formal, scrupulous, morbid religion, which begins and ends with Self, which gives no peace or power, and which is contrary to the whole spirit of the Gospel of CHRIST.

For you, the teaching of this “Refreshment Sunday”—(4th Sunday in Lent)—seems especially intended.

The Gospel (S. John vi. 1—14) tells of the Feast which God has provided. The Epistle (Gal. iv. 21—31) reminds you that you are not children of the Bondswoman, but of the Free. The Collect bids you pray that although you deserve to be punished, you may be mercifully relieved by the free grace of GOD.

All that you have been passing through, during this Lent—all this sense of dissatisfaction and dreariness—has been leading you up to a definite point. Let us look at it more closely.

That one wicked word which you now remember—it can never be unsaid, even by a lifetime of devotion. That one deed of evil, however trifling, by which God was dishonoured—it can never be undone, by any future holiness: not even if you could live the life of the INCARNATE GOD Himself on earth. You cannot do more than your duty, in the Future. (S. Luke xvii. 10.) You cannot make up for the Past. That one sinful thought, word or deed, has earned—

for you and for me—the Death that knows no Resurrection. (Rom. vi. 23.)

What you are now feeling—all this restlessness—this dread of being alone—this fear of death—it is the shadow of a REALITY!

There is a class of shallow Philosophers who speak and write as if they alone believed in the Love and Fatherhood of GOD! So far as their teaching opposes that caricature of the Gospel which represents GOD as a stern unmerciful Judge, and JESUS CHRIST saving us out of His Hands—making the FATHER love His own children!—so far, it is good. But when they stand up and speak to the ignorant as if they alone believed in GOD as a FATHER, have they not forgotten that in every Creed the Church declares: “I believe in GOD the FATHER Almighty?” Can they ever have studied our Communion Office?

“Shallow” philosophers I call them; for it is shallow teaching to ignore any part of GOD’s Revelation merely because we do not understand it. What is there that we *do* understand, fully? May not even an earthly father have truths to reveal to his children in after life, which he cannot tell them in their infancy? Are we to leave out that part of GOD’s Character which we find it hard to understand—are we to forget His Holiness, and think only of His Love? Shall we blot out all that His Word tells us of His Justice, because it does not tally with our poor human ideas of a Divine Being?

It is shallow teaching—this popular theology! “Do nothing very wicked. Be kind to your brothers and sisters. Trust *them*; believe what *they* tell you; do what *they* ask of you. But as to your FATHER in Heaven, trust HIM, *so far as it suits you*; believe His Word, so far as you have tested it by your own

finite intelligence : obey His commands, so far—as they appear to you reasonable !”

What GOD has taught you, this Lent, is far more true. What GOD has written will stand, when all this popular theology shall have passed away. “**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the LORD of Hosts.**” “Just and true are Thy ways, Thou KING of Saints.” (Isa. vi. 3; Rev. xv. 3.) History, Experience, Prophecy,—all tell us the same thing :—“**BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.**”

It is a Law of the natural kingdom, that fire *will* burn : and it is a Law of the spiritual Kingdom, that “**THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.**” (Rom. vi. 23.) You cannot evade that Law.

The Church is not content with half truths. She tells us, indeed, that GOD is our FATHER, and that GOD loves us ; but she also tells us that there is something in the nature of sin which makes it impossible for a sinner, in his sin, to enter Heaven. (Rev. xxi. 27.) What you are now feeling is *true* : **SIN IS A BARRIER.**

And GOD saw that it would be a barrier for ever, unless He Himself provided the means by which that barrier could be broken down. He knew all the sin of the world—past, present, future. And He knew that even one sin would be—ruin.

Therefore—loving His sinful children—longing for them—GOD dealt with them right royally ! He asked nothing at their hands. He said : “I will put away your sin by the Sacrifice of MYSELF.”

And JESUS, Who was GOD Himself, (Acts xx. 28,) —ONE with the FATHER—this is what so many books ignore, which speak of GOD the FATHER as “wreaking His wrath on His SON,” and use words too awful to repeat—JESUS, Who loves us with a Love unconceivable,—Who knew what was involved in the loss of *one* soul, and knew what sin deserved,—took the sin of

all sinners, past, present, and future, on Himself. "HE was wounded for OUR transgressions," &c., &c. (Isa. liii. 5.) He gathered up into one, the manifold debt of the world,—and paid it all, with His own Life-Blood, on Calvary. He became the Sin-Bearer. On Him was laid your sin, and my sin. All that was needed, in the sight of GOD, to put away sin, JESUS did, and JESUS suffered. And then, on the Cross, He said: "IT IS FINISHED."

Thus JESUS CHRIST has made "a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

Therefore—*i.e.*, on account of that ONE SACRIFICE once made—His Church sets forth the offer of Free Pardon. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (Isa. i. 18.)

Brethren, you know all this! It was the substance of our LORD's first Sermon in Nazareth. (S. Luke iv. 16—21.) You have read it, and it has been preached to you, again and again.

And if you would but read your Bibles, instead of flying to "devotional books" for the whole of your religion,—if you would but study the Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles,—you would find that it was this Gospel which gave such force to the words and lives of the early Christians. They never doubted as to the result of that Sacrifice on Calvary. They believed that CHRIST's work was "finished." And so, they went everywhere in the enjoyment of the "blessedness" described by David:—knowing that their iniquity was forgiven; (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2; Rom. iv. 6—8;) peaceful and happy, because sure of their acceptance in CHRIST. (Eph. i. 6.)

They did not talk, as people do now, of doing their best, and hoping that JESUS would make up for

their deficiencies! They spoke as men who knew that they were "complete in HIM." (Col. ii. 10.) They lost their own individuality; they lost themselves in CHRIST. They felt that they were covered with the robe of His Righteousness. (Isa. lxi. 10. Phil. iii. 9.) And being thus "complete in Him," they gave up their lives to love and serve Him, and to shew their love to Him by sacrificing all for His sake.

If asked how they could "presume" to claim this peace, with all the sin that they had found out in themselves, they would have answered: "GOD's thoughts are higher than my thoughts: and GOD tells me that my sin has been laid on His SON JESUS CHRIST. I know not what may become of the heathen, for GOD has not told me; but what He *has* told me, about myself, I believe:—that I have been 'joined unto the LORD;' united to CHRIST: that my miserable self is made one with His glorious Humanity. (Gal. iii. 26—29; Rom. vi. 3—11; 1 Cor. vi. 17.) I dare not say that what GOD declares, He does not mean. I may doubt the word of man; I may doubt even the mother who bare me: but I cannot doubt my GOD!"

And so, going back to Calvary and to the Word of GOD, as the foundation of their peace, they realized in their own lives the wondrous truths taught in our LORD's discourse with Nicodemus. (S. John iii.) They began—as HE began—with Baptism; and then they received the teaching which follows; they laid hold on Eternal Life. They had received a Message from GOD; they believed in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And when the Devil harassed them, as he harasses you and me, and they often failed, in spite of all effort, they fell back on the WORD of GOD, and were thus kept in peace:—a peace built—not on their own

feelings, or on their own conscious improvement, but on the Word of the Living GOD. (Isa. xxvi. 3.)

This was the uniform teaching of the Apostles:—the uniform belief of the early Church. Study the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, throughout; especially the following passages: Acts ii. 38; v. 31; x. 43; xiii. 38, 39; xx. 24; Rom. iii.—viii.; 2 Cor. v. 19—21; Gal. iii. 13; Eph. i. 7; ii. 14; Phil. iii. 8, 9; Col. i. 20; 1 Thess. i. 5; 1 Tim. i. 11—15; ii. 5; Titus iii. 7; Heb. viii.—x.

Is it not *one* Message throughout? “It is finished.” “Through this MAN is preached unto you the Forgiveness of sins.”

Is not the experience described, the same in every case? They took GOD at His Word; they rejoiced in His Salvation; they trusted their souls to Him; and then, they went forth as heralds, to spread the glad tidings—the Message of their King: “To you—to you—is the Word of this Salvation sent.”

The Prayer-Book takes it for granted that you have already realized all this. Half the obloquy heaped upon the Prayer-Book arises from not understanding that it is meant for *believing* people. It pre-supposes that the preliminary work is done—that foundation-truths are learnt;—that those who come to Church have already taken GOD at His Word, and believed in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, so as to serve Him with “a quiet mind.”

My object, in this Lecture, is to help those who have not yet reached this point:—those whose consciences by sin are accused, but who know nothing, as yet, of “Pardon and Peace.” Our Lenten work will be a failure, if it comes short of this. I want, by the aid of the HOLY SPIRIT, to help you out into the

light—to enable you to realize your privileges as children of God.

I ask, then: Why not take GOD at His Word? You would believe *me*: you would not think that I would intentionally deceive you. Why not then—much more—believe GOD Himself?

But, you say, you are not sure if what I am teaching you really *is* the Word of GOD Himself.

Surely, it would be worth while to take down your Bibles, and find out for yourselves! (S. John v. 39; Acts xvii. 11, 12.) Study the passages already quoted, in the Acts and the Epistles.

If it is *not* GOD's Word that I am teaching you, then reject it; do not receive it on *my* authority.

But if you find that it *is* GOD's Word,—then, why not receive it?

Do you say, it is a "dangerous" doctrine:—that it leads to careless living? It is true that in every age some have thus abused the free Grace of GOD. It was so in the days of S. Paul. ("Shall we continue in sin, that Grace may abound?" Rom. vi. 1.) And yet, the Apostle did not retract his teaching. He did not venture to alter GOD's Message. Instead of this, he answered the objection by reminding them that they had been "made free from sin," in order that they might "become servants to GOD;" that they had been joined to CHRIST in Baptism, in order that they might "bring forth fruit unto GOD." (Rom. vi. 2, 3, 4, 6, 11—22; vii. 4.)

Do you say it is "presumptuous," to feel sure of GOD's Forgiveness? Surely, there is no presumption in believing what GOD Himself has said? Surely, it is more presumptuous, to reject it.

"How is it that ye have no faith?" What is the reason that you still refuse to believe?

Is it Pride, do you think? Are you trying to *do*

something first, so as to earn God's Love? Put away that Pride. "Humble yourself in the sight of the LORD, and He shall lift you up." (James iv. 10.) Say to GOD: "I have sinned: I can never make up for the Past. But I thank Thee that in Thy Holy Word it is written that the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all sin;—that He has shed His Blood for me: and humbly, as a little child, I take Thee at Thy Word."

But perhaps there is another reason why you cannot receive this Message of Peace. There is something *wrong*:—there is some one thing that you are determined to keep, and that you know JESUS CHRIST would ask you to give up. Your heart is closed—*wilfully* closed—against the Message of God's Love. But "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (S. Mark viii. 36.) If iniquity be thus in thine hand, put it away. If thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out. (S. Mark ix. 47.)

And now, to bring this matter definitely to a point: do not let this Lent pass by, and leave you still in bondage; afraid of the Future—uncertain as to your present state in GOD's sight—doubting what would become of you, if you were to die to-night.

Of course, there will be a struggle, if you try to get free. Satan will do his utmost to keep you back. He will suggest to you that it is more humble to wait quietly till GOD vouchsafe to grant this blessing, instead of laying hold at once of the Eternal Life which GOD has already given, in JESUS CHRIST. Or he will fill your mind with wandering thoughts, and then tell you that you are mocking GOD by such unreal prayers. Or he will aggravate your temptations: he will perhaps succeed in making you fall more than usual, and then

he will taunt you with your defeats, and say: "This Gospel is not for *you*!" He will try to blunt the edge of all that has just been taught you, by the idle gossip of the Church Porch. He may even use a Christian friend—as he used S. Peter, (S. Matt. xvi. 22, 23,) to tempt you. Your foes may be those of your own household. Dark hours may lie before you.

Be on your guard, then. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you." Use the sword of the SPIRIT, which is the Word of GOD. Take your stand upon what GOD has said. However little you *feel*, thank GOD for the FACT which He has revealed. Praise GOD because of His WORD. (Ps. lvi. 4.)

Do not wait for improvement in yourselves—for more satisfactory prayers—for more faith, or a deeper penitence. The poor sufferers in the Gospel could not *pray*. They only cried for mercy, in short and simple petitions. "JESUS, Master, have mercy! LORD, help me! LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And yet, none were sent empty away.

GOD is as ready to receive you to-day, as He would be after years of waiting. If you were to delay for twenty years, you would still be unable to bring anything in your hand which could really commend you to the High and Holy GOD.

Faith does not make GOD love you. The trees and the flowers were not *created*, when the miracle of healing was wrought on Bartimæus. His eyes were opened; that was all. He only saw what had been there all the time.

GOD has loved you all your life. Eighteen hundred years ago, the Blood of JESUS was shed for you. The free Forgiveness has been waiting for you these many years. The HOLY SPIRIT has been yearning to apply it to your soul.

I have urged you in former Lectures to look into your own hearts. I now ask you to look entirely away from self, and to believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

As the Israelites thanked GOD for the message of mercy, and steadily fixed their eyes upon the brazen serpent, till the life-current flowed through their veins, and they felt that they were healed,—so, I pray you, look up at your SAVIOUR. Think of HIM. Speak to HIM. Praise HIM for His Love—for His complete Salvation—for His once-offered Sacrifice.

Say to HIM: "O LORD, I have sinned. I cannot undo the Past; but Thy Blood cleanses from all sin. Thou hast died for sinners. I am a sinner. Thou hast died for *me*.—O LORD, I cannot *feel* Thy Love: I cannot *feel* that my sins are washed away in Thy Blood; but I praise Thee for Thy WORD. I thank Thee for having told me that Thou hast died for me. Help me to feel it! Open my eyes, O LORD, and shew me Thy Love. LORD, that I may receive my sight!"

Just as I am,—without one plea
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of GOD, I come.

GRANT, WE BESEECH THEE, MERCIFUL LORD, TO THY FAITHFUL PEOPLE PARDON AND PEACE, THAT THEY MAY BE CLEANSED FROM ALL THEIR SINS, AND SERVE THEE WITH A QUIET MIND, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

LECTURE IV.



OUR lot, my Brethren, has been cast in days when the position of the Church affords abundant reason for anxiety, and for thankfulness.

(1) For *Anxiety*. Every day brings more clearly before the minds of thoughtful Churchmen the intense difficulties by which we are surrounded. All who care for their Church ought to pray for her, day by day, that GOD will give her the wisdom, courage, and patience which she needs:—that she may be guided aright by the HOLY GHOST; that she may be willing to sacrifice anything, rather than part with one iota of GOD'S Eternal Truth; and yet, may not, by unadvised haste, damage any part of the work which He has willed that she should accomplish.

(2) Yet there is also cause for *Thankfulness*.

Some of you may remember the days when the Church of England was dead and careless. From that death-sleep, in GOD'S mercy, she was aroused. Then, from the dark chamber in which her truths had lain stored like useless lumber, GOD brought out, first of all, this grand Foundation-Doctrine—that JESUS CHRIST has purchased a full and free and immediate Forgiveness for all who will receive it. After that, He brought to light what are called "Church Truths." The duty and blessedness of united Prayer in GOD'S House; the value of the two Sacraments; the need of Reverence; the meaning of "Worship;" the necessity of Self-Examination—all that is involved in carrying out the system of the Prayer-Book.

Of course, as each Truth was thus disinterred, earnest Churchmen felt doubtful how far all could be harmonized. Those who had learnt one side of God's Teaching too often thought it necessary to ignore the other side which the same God had revealed.

And yet, if we could but set prejudice aside, and abstain from that conflict about mere words and technicalities which is the secret of half our controversies in the present day, we should see how all these truths are connected.

GOD, the holy GOD, wills that we should be holy. Therefore—*i.e.*, in order that we may be made free from sin, and live as His obedient children,—He says to every one who is conscious of his guilt: "Come at once to Me, your FATHER; acknowledge your sin; believe in the SAVIOUR who died for you. 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.' (Isa. xlv. 22.) First, be freed from the burden of guilt; and then, arise, repent deeply for the past, and walk in newness of life."

Here, the good old Churchman is alarmed. "Is it not a dangerous doctrine," he suggests, "that we may be quite sure we are forgiven? Surely, it is safer to go on humbly and anxiously doing our best, and hoping that we may, for CHRIST's sake, be at last accepted?"

Yes, if you left this doctrine to stand alone, it would indeed be dangerous; you might then give up all watchfulness and care about the concerns of your soul!

But look at the other side. Why is it that God has thus set our heart at liberty? In order that we may run the way of His commandments. Why is it that God has offered us a free Pardon at the outset? In order that we may be able to advance;—that we may grow

in grace: (2 Pet. i. 5—11; iii. 18:)—that we may become “conformed to the Image of His SON;”—that the Life of JESUS may by degrees be developed in us, till the regenerate soul is fitted for the Kingdom of Glory. (Rom. viii. 1—4, 28, 29.)

Surely, this is the doctrine of our Church. Read the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. What is the meaning of “a quiet mind?” A mind that is at rest,—that knows the blessing of “Peace,” because it has consciously received “Pardon.” The words describe the blessedness of one who knows that he is accepted in the Beloved:—of one who believes that GOD received him for His own at Baptism, and buried his sins in the grave of CHRIST, and has now enabled him to receive the Message of His Love, and to cry, Abba, Father.

Others, again, who gladly accept this Fact of the Gospel, shrink from that side of GOD’S Truth which has been set forth in the previous Lectures. When you go to such as these, and speak to them of the need of Self-Examination, they cry out: “You are bringing us into bondage!”

Is it likely to bring you into “bondage,” to teach you that we must ever be striving against that evil within us which is ever striving for the mastery over us? (Rom. vii. 21—23; vi. 14, 15.)

Try to lay hold of this simple thought. GOD has brought us into the world, chosen us in CHRIST, given to us the HOLY SPIRIT, bestowed on us “Pardon and Peace,”—all, for this express purpose: “that we should be *holy* and without blame before Him.” (Eph. i. 4.)

Look again at that Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. Why is it that we are to seek this Pardon and Peace? “That we may be cleansed from all our

sins, and SERVE THEE with a quiet mind." The soul, when thus cleansed, is not to go to sleep, or continue in sin, but to give itself up to GOD'S service. Being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we are to "SERVE HIM without fear, in holiness and righteousness before HIM, all the days of our life." We are to watch, as well as pray; to strive against sin; to fight earnestly, day by day, in the great battle against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. We are to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us." (Heb. vi. 11, 12; xii. 1, 2.)

And therefore, we must examine ourselves; we must learn to know our besetting sins, and to detect "every weight" which we have to lay aside. We must look into our own hearts and lives, from day to day, from year to year; and especially at this season of Lent. It is set apart for this very purpose:—that we may find out how far our besetting sins have been crushed, and lacking graces gained;—how far we have obtained a fresh insight into the Character of our LORD: how far the Life of JESUS has been reproduced in us—"made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. iv. 11.) We must try to learn—not one Truth only, however important, but—the *balance* of Truth. We must lay aside all prejudice, and open our hearts to receive—not merely the doctrines that we prefer, but "the whole counsel of God."

Let me now try to help some of you who are endeavouring to examine yourselves, but are hindered by certain practical difficulties.

I. Some are disheartened because they feel *no Sorrow for sin*. "I have found out many sins," they say, "but I do not feel really sorry. I have not a broken and contrite heart. I do not weep in secret

for my sins, like the people of whom I read in books."

Be definite. Do not confuse facts and feelings. Your work, at present, is simply this: to honour GOD by trying to find out the *facts* about yourself. And this, remember, is your only object, as yet. You are seeking, by Self-Examination, to obtain an accurate knowledge of yourselves as you really are in GOD's sight;—to enter, as it were, into HIS Presence, and study that Book, wherein are written all the thoughts, words, and deeds, of our whole lives.

It is important to see this clearly—that at present we are not concerned with feelings; only with facts. Persevere. Never mind how dry it may all seem. A great deal of our best work in Lent is very dry and distasteful. Never mind if the whole of Lent seem wasted over it. Persevere, till you have before you a true and accurate account of your life. Contrition will follow, by GOD's help. We shall consider this subject presently, and see what means GOD has provided for obtaining this "godly sorrow." But meanwhile, keep steadily to the point set before you. Be content with one thing at a time.

II. Others are discouraged because they see in themselves, as yet, *no Amendment of life*. They complain that they fall into the same old sins, again and again; that they are as weak as ever, if exposed to old temptations.

The answer just given applies to you also. Be definite. One thing at a time. Of course, this is the real end in view—to amend our lives, according to GOD's Holy Word. But this cannot be, till we have found out what needs to be amended. The first step towards doing right, is to find out what we have done wrong.

III. Some are inclined to despair because, as yet, they find *no Happiness*.

I am speaking now to those who have never known the comfort of feeling that their sins are forgiven, and that they are accepted in the Beloved.

Till now, although GOD long ago brought you into His Kingdom,—at your Baptism,—you have never realized your position and your responsibilities. You have been living a quiet, indifferent sort of life ; merely living “like other people ;” neither cold, nor hot : not utterly careless, perhaps ;—though some of you, I fear, *have* been careless—very careless !—living entirely for self and the world.

But now, you are beginning to examine yourself, for the first time in your life, in any real sense ; and you feel unhappy. You grow more and more unhappy. And so, you are afraid that there must be something wrong about your Self-Examination ; that it is doing you no good. You are out of heart, because you find no comfort, in that quiet time alone with GOD.

And yet, is not your unhappiness an answer to prayer :—not to your own prayers only, but to those of the whole Church ? Have we not been asking GOD, day by day, since Lent began, to “create and make in us new and contrite hearts ;”—that we may so confess our sins, and acknowledge our wretchedness, as to obtain Forgiveness ? Is it not the chief thing that we have been beseeching Him to do for us—to deliver us from “all blindness of heart,” and to give us the help of the HOLY GHOST ?

What did our LORD say was to be the first work of the HOLY GHOST ? To “convince the world of SIN.” (S. John xvi. 8.) Thank GOD, His work in you has begun ! The plough has gone down deep into your heart, and the weeds are disclosed. “In the beginning,

God said, Let there be light, and there was light." So has it been, with *you*. That light which was sent into the heart of Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, making him see his sin, and cry out: "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—that light is now breaking in upon your soul. You are beginning to see yourself as GOD sees you.

Instead, therefore, of being disheartened, you ought to be thanking GOD for this new proof of His favour and gracious goodness towards you. Whatever your past life may have been,—whether one of open sin, or that quiet, colourless existence of which I have spoken, you have cause to thank GOD that your false peace is now disturbed. GOD leads through darkness to light—through death, to life; and He is fulfilling in you those words of JESUS: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (S. John xii. 24.)

You asked GOD to show you your sins; and He has done that which you asked Him to do. Thank Him, and take courage. Do not shrink from more light. Honour the HOLY GHOST. Trust Him. Open your heart to receive His further teaching. Be brave! Face the truth. Do not be surprised if you find out that you are not what you expected, or what your friends said that you were. Do not lose heart, if you find that you are more wicked than you imagined.

Go on with your Self-Examination calmly and quietly; trusting that "HE which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the Day of JESUS CHRIST." (Phil. i. 6.)

IV. Some are disturbed by another kind of difficulty. Long ago, they found the SAVIOUR. And now they say: "*What you are teaching interferes with my Peace.*"

No, it does not interfere with your Peace, unless you confuse two different things: our acceptance in CHRIST, and our efforts to live for CHRIST.

The idea of HOLY SCRIPTURE is so perfect! So different from the narrow, one-sided view of man! It tells us, indeed, that GOD loves us; that He offers us a finished Salvation; and that He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the Day of JESUS CHRIST. (Phil. i. 6.) But it also tells us that we must watch and pray; that we must work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling; (Phil. ii. 12;) that we must *abide* in CHRIST. (S. John xv. 4—6, 9, 10.)

We must use all the helps that GOD gives us, to strengthen our weak natures. If we dwell exclusively on one side of truth and duty, we shall go wrong.

If we grasp this thought *only*, that GOD is able to keep that which we have committed to Him, it will be likely to develop into that repulsive form of Christianity which seems to consist in shouting out, "*We are saved, whatever may become of others!*"—that noisy sort of religion which is so contrary to what GOD loves,—so opposed to the meek and quiet spirit which is, in the sight of GOD, of great price. (1 Pet. iii. 4.)

And, on the other hand, if we dwell *only* on the truth that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, there is danger lest our religion degenerate into morbid superstition:—lest we be always tossed to and fro, and carried about with every fresh wind of doctrine:—lest we become entirely absorbed with the concerns of our own souls; afraid of being "a castaway;" powerless to comfort or influence others.

Church Teaching is so different from all this! It points out, in turn, each side of GOD's Truth.

"Thank GOD," it says, "for His free Salvation. Thank Him for any grace which, by His Mercy, you

have received. Do not let Satan persuade you that your religion has been unreal, because you have not hitherto practised Self-Examination. Yet, on the other hand, do not rest satisfied with the point to which you have already attained. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, begin the new duty which now lies before you : ”

“EXAMINE YOURSELVES.”

LECTURE V.



I PROPOSE to-day to answer more fully a question at which it was only possible to glance, in the preceding Lecture: WHY IS SELF-EXAMINATION NECESSARY, FOR REAL BELIEVERS?

The teaching given during this Lent has aroused opposition in the minds of many earnest Christians.

"You tell us," they say, "that (if we have never done so before) we ought to look back on the whole of our past lives, to humble ourselves definitely before God, and confess to Him all our sins, so far as we can remember them, from childhood onward! You tell us, further, that once in every year we ought in the same way to review the past year. We cannot listen to such teaching. Thank GOD, we found Peace long ago, through JESUS CHRIST. All our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea. What need, therefore, can *we* have, of this Self-Examination? For those who have never felt their sin, and sought Forgiveness, it may be necessary: but as for us, we are free, by GOD'S Mercy; and no man shall bring us again into bondage."

Brethren! Try to lay aside all prejudice, and honestly open your hearts to the promised teaching of GOD'S OWN SPIRIT, while we look into this matter in the light of His HOLY WORD. Say to GOD: "That which I see not, teach THOU me!" (Job xxxiv. 32.)

“WHY,” you ask, “IS SELF-EXAMINATION NECESSARY, FOR REAL BELIEVERS?”

I answer:—

I. It is necessary to examine ourselves, *lest we should be* LOST.

I know that many will say: “How can we be lost? Salvation is freely offered. We have accepted that great Salvation; we can never fall away.”

Are you not confusing two different things:—a present Salvation, and final Salvation? Our LORD has said: “He that heareth My Word, and believeth on HIM that sent Me, *hath* everlasting Life.” (S. John v. 24.) But the same LORD has said: “He that *endureth to the end* shall be saved.” (S. Matt. x. 22.) The lifeboat may have placed you in a state of salvation; yet your common-sense tells you, that if you go to sleep and fall overboard, you will have been saved in vain from the sinking ship.

Few errors are more dangerous than this idea—that Believers can never fall away. It may do no harm, practically, to some earnest souls, who love their LORD, and would rather do anything than grieve Him: but when it gains a hearing among that larger class of people who are *bargaining* for Salvation, we tremble for them. The habitual drunkard or profligate—the bitter and the uncharitable professor—the covetous and the world-loving—such as these will dare to tell you that they have “seen their title clear,” and feel certain that they can never be lost! An ignorant young man, just pardoned by God’s mercy, feels bound to publish everywhere—long before he has had time for a deep or lasting repentance, that he is—not only safe now, but—safe for all Eternity!

I speak that which I know; I bear witness to that which I have heard; and I beseech all those *who* love our LORD, and care for His honour, to

re-consider their present convictions, calmly and honestly.

Take your Bible, and read His own words* in S. John xv. "Every branch IN ME that beareth not fruit, He taketh away. . . . If a man ABIDE NOT IN ME, he is cast forth, as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Observe: the branch was IN the Vine, at first; but it did not ABIDE in the Vine, and therefore it ceased to bear fruit, and was taken away. May we lay to heart the solemn warning!

"But has not our LORD said: 'They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand?'" (S. John x. 28, 29.)

Yes; but the context—here, as elsewhere—proves that this Promise is conditional:—that it is made to those only who "abide" in CHRIST—who hear His Voice, and follow Him. It is true that the Enemy cannot pluck us out of the FATHER'S Hand. GOD is stronger than Satan. But it is equally true, that we can hurl ourselves out of His Hand, if we choose. GOD never destroys our Free-Will. (Ezek. xviii. 24—27; Heb. iii. 6, 14; vi. 11, 12; Col. i. 21—23; 1 Thess. iii. 5; 1 John ii. 24, 28; Rev. ii. 10; iii. 11.)

Remember Judas! He knew the place where JESUS prayed, and doubtless he oft-times resorted thither with the other disciples. No one suspected that he was the traitor, though JESUS had said: "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil;" and again, still more plainly: "One of you shall betray Me." (S. John vi. 70; xiii. 21—30.) Even when he had "gone out" to betray his LORD, they thought that he had gone to do some fresh act of service for CHRIST or for His Poor!

Remember Demas! He was the companion—the "fellow-labourer"—of S. Paul;—loved and trusted by

the Apostle. Yet, after awhile, we read: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world!" (Philemon, verse 24; 2 Tim. iv. 10.) If such a one could fall away, can you presume to say: "I shall never be moved; there shall no harm happen unto me?"

"But," you say, "these men never were savingly united to CHRIST."

At any rate, they so appeared to their fellow-Christians; and probably to themselves. What special revelation have *you* received—what hidden mark do you know to be stamped on your own soul, which you can prove to have been lacking in their case? "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.)

Are we nearer to GOD than were "the Angels which kept not their first estate?" Have we no need of the warning based upon their fall? (S. Jude, verse 6.)

Are we more "savingly united" to the LORD than was S. Paul? Yet even he—though he had been so wonderfully converted, and so honoured by visions and revelations, that he could not utter the glory which he had seen,—even he—felt obliged to "keep under" his body, &c., lest, after preaching to others, he should himself be a castaway. (1 Cor. ix. 27.)

One more warning from Holy Scripture. "I would put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the LORD, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." (S. Jude, verse 5.) Study, verse by verse, the solemn teaching of S. Paul on this subject, in 1 Cor. x. 1—4; also Heb. iii. and iv.

Read also 1 Pet. v. 8; 2 Pet. i. 10, 11; ii. 20, 21; iii. 17; Heb. vi. 1—8; x. 26—39; xii. 12—29. Are not all these passages inspired sermons on the text which I am now striving to press home on your hearts:

“Examine yourselves,”—lest ye fall away, and be finally lost?

II. Even if we were certain of being finally saved, Self-Examination would be needed, *in order to prevent BACKSLIDING.*

Of all the sad experiences of the Minister of CHRIST, none is so sad as to watch this declension, in those who once gave promise of a noble Christian life.

They themselves may be unconscious of the change. They are, perhaps, even more earnest than at first, in outward devotion and in all good works; more zealous than ever, in supporting their own religious views; more flattered than ever, by their friends. Measuring themselves by themselves, they are contented. Yet, all the time, “little foxes” are spoiling their grapes; little sins have sprung up in their hearts, and gained the dominion over them:—pride, vanity, indolence, bitterness, greediness, self-indulgence, self-will, contempt of others;—the very self-righteousness which they profess to abhor! “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him,”—signs that his early vigour is passing away—“yet he knoweth not.” (Hosea vii. 9.)

If, then, we wish to be saved from this miserable condition, we must humbly seek, year by year, to know our true state before GOD; we must examine ourselves, lest the life of CHRIST, the Living Vine, should be hindered from flowing into the inmost parts of our being; lest, while using religious phrases, we should be ceasing really to live for GOD.

Remember the sad and tender pleading of our LORD with His Church at Ephesus: “I know thy works; . . . thou hast borne, and hast patience,

and for My Name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." (Rev. ii. 2—5.) Surely, you that have known the Love of JESUS will not reply—as so many have replied to His gentle appeal: "Master, we cannot repent; for the beginning of repentance is Self-Examination, and the party to which we belong has decided that Self-Examination is a sign of spiritual bondage!"

III. Self-Examination is necessary to PROGRESS.

It is not enough, merely to hold our own against the Enemy. We must go forward, and conquer. (1 Tim. vi. 11, 12; Rev. iii. 21; Heb. v. 11, to vi. 3; Phil. iii. 12—14.)

But how can we conquer, unless we have learned to know the sins by which we are specially beset?

It is not enough, that the Foundation be rightly laid. On that Foundation, we must build the gold and the silver and the precious stones. (1 Cor. iii. 11—13.) We must grow in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God.

But how can we grow in grace, unless, by self-scrutiny, we have been taught the special help of the HOLY GHOST for which we have need to pray? We have not, because we ask not. We ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss.

If we shrink from the rough work of honest self-searching, healthy progress is almost impossible. Either we fall into a listless, disheartened state, in which we imagine that we are backsliding, when, in God's sight, we have really advanced; or we think that all is well with us, because we have not sunk

below the standard of the weak Christians by whom we are surrounded !

IV. *Self-Examination fosters HUMILITY.*

"Thus saith the High and Lofty ONE that inhabiteth Eternity, Whose Name is HOLY: I dwell in the High and Holy Place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isa. lvii. 15.) Until we are thus emptied of self, we cannot be filled with all the fulness of GOD. And yet, how rare is true humility! We confess to GOD that we are "miserable sinners;" yet how startled and indignant we feel, when the keen eye of a neighbour detects but a fragment of the sinfulness which we have thus acknowledged!

False humility is common enough. Humble words cost little. They are often a mere excuse for indolence, or a cloke for vanity. People will readily tell you how "wicked" they are. But if only you agree with them!—if only you say: "Yes, it is quite true: in fact, I have often been grieved to observe it!"—You will soon see, by the change in their very countenance, what a shallow humility it is, which has been thus paraded before the world.

Real humility does not consist in talking to others about our sinfulness, but in acting on that knowledge of it which we have gained by Self-Examination. I do not say that humility cannot otherwise be attained, for GOD will not be limited in His way of working; but it seldom *is* attained, without Self-Examination.

When thus we have, in some measure, learnt the truth about ourselves,—then, if all men speak well of us, and our silly, weak nature is flattered by their praise, we turn to that little book wherein we have written the *true* story of our life, in plain black and white that

cannot be mistaken. We think of those humbling facts: we remind ourselves that they are but a small fraction of the evil which the Holy God has seen in us. We kneel down. We humble ourselves doubly before God for our wretched vanity. We come to Him as the poor sinners that we really are, saying: "Man looketh at the outward appearance, but THOU lookest at the heart. O GOD, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (S. Luke xviii. 10—13.)

V. *Self-Examination teaches us FORBEARANCE with others.*

How hard and intolerant some Christians become, as life advances! Our LORD, while He hated and exposed the sin, dealt tenderly with the sinner. Yet these—His followers—how severely do they condemn the weak, the wavering, the fallen! "He must be a hypocrite; he has told a lie." Or—"She cannot be a real Christian; she lost her temper." Or—"His case is hopeless; he has fallen back into his old temptations."

When, however, by Self-Examination, we have learnt to know ourselves,—then, if the hard word rises to our lips, or we have lost hope and patience in dealing with another, we look into our own hearts, and remember how little we have conquered our own besetting sin; how often, when we thought that it was crushed for ever, it has risen up and overcome us. So we kneel down, and ask God to forgive us that hard word, or that hard thought; and we say to ourselves: "How can I afford to be hard on others, when I myself fall so often, and yet believe myself to be real and earnest? God raised up S. Peter again, after his fall; God has raised up me, again and again; and He can help these souls also." Or: "I was once as careless as my children now are, and yet God

had mercy on me." So we learn—not, indeed, to tolerate sin, but—to deal gently with the sinner:—to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD, for CHRIST's sake, hath forgiven us. (S. Matt. xviii. 33 ; Eph. iv. 1, 2, 31, 32 ; Col. iii. 12, 13 ; Gal. vi. 1—3.)

VI. *Self-Examination enables us to HELP OTHERS.*

We can never really help others, in their spiritual difficulties, until—in some way or other—we have analysed our own hearts. We may have laid hold of a little fragment of Truth—either "Gospel Truth," or "Church Truth,"—and repeat it again and again ; and GOD may bless the often ill-chosen remedy, for His compassions fail not.

But more than this is needed, if we are to be true "labourers together with GOD." Sooner or later, all faithful soldiers and servants of CHRIST will find others coming to them for guidance and sympathy in the spiritual conflict. And this they cannot give, unless they know by experience the details of the struggle, and the manifold devices of the great Enemy. We cannot teach our brother how to battle against evil, until, as the result of careful self-searching, we have learned to take one after another of our besetting sins, and to fight against it in the power of the HOLY GHOST.

Is it not worth any trouble, thus to become fitted to help others ? Is it not worth all the defeats, the disappointments, the humbling discipline ?

"Remember the words of the LORD JESUS, how He said: It is more blessed to give, than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of CHRIST." (Gal. vi. 2.)

VII. Lastly, (and this is the highest motive of all,) *by Self-Examination we GLORIFY GOD.*

Give glory to GOD! This is the key-note of the whole Bible. Every true child of GOD seeks to glorify Him.

If angels in Heaven bow down before Him, with veiled faces, the saint on earth may well cry: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips."

I believe, that even more honouring to GOD than our times of conscious joy, are those seasons when the soul is bowed low in His Presence, only able to lie in the dust, and say: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!"—those hours of self-abasement in which, not as bond-slaves, but as reconciled children, we shrink with a holy fear from leaving one sin unacknowledged, and spare ourselves no pain in counting up the debt which He has paid, once and for ever, by His precious Blood-shedding.

By that weary Self-Examination, we glorify GOD, before the holy Angels. We manifest to principalities and powers the Holiness of Him by Whom we have been redeemed. Then, He Who died that we might live—our all-loving LORD—is glorified *in* His saints. And this, in our best and truest moments, is the object of our life: "that GOD in all things may be glorified, through JESUS CHRIST." (1 Pet. iv. 11.)

I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say. Forget all party prejudices and strivings about words; and pray, simply and honestly, that you may see what is the Will of GOD in CHRIST JESUS concerning you.

For your own sake—lest you suffer loss in the Day of the LORD, or be finally cast away:—for the sake of others—that you may learn to deal with them *more lovingly*, and to help them *more wisely*:—for

the sake of HIM Who died for you—that He may see of the travail of His Soul and be satisfied,—begin, this Lent, the work of systematic SELF-EXAMINATION.

Confess your sins unto the LORD. Let every detail of your past life be unfolded before HIM, in one act of solemn penitence. “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD GOD of Israel, and *thus* and *thus* have I done.” (Josh. vii. 19—21.)

“GIVE GLORY TO THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, AND MAKE CONFESSION UNTO HIM.”

LECTURE VI.



OUR object, in these Lent Lectures, has been to lead you, by GOD's help, to that definiteness in the spiritual life which is so necessary to peace and to progress.

In order to attain this definiteness, we spent some time, at the beginning of Lent, in trying, by Prayer and careful Self-Examination, to find out our real condition in the sight of GOD.

By means of this Self-Examination, we discovered certain definite sins by which we have been overcome in days past, and are still, it may be, in some measure, harassed and conquered.

Next, we learnt how clear and definite, as interpreted by other passages of Holy Scripture, are those words of JESUS CHRIST: "IT IS FINISHED." We have learnt that it is a FACT. The debt is really paid; the barrier is really broken down.

Hence, as we have seen, it is the glorious privilege of the Church to proclaim the Message of Mercy: "GOD Himself has provided the Ransom; GOD Himself has become our Salvation. Come back to the FATHER who loves you. Come back to the SAVIOUR who died for you. Come and receive Mercy: that so, in the strength of a realized Pardon, you may arise to newness of life."

I have pressed upon you the importance of personally receiving this Message of Salvation. I have besought you not to walk in darkness any longer:—not to continue in that vague state wherein so many



live and die ; all their lifetime subject to bondage : hoping, praying, resolving, breaking their resolutions, crushed again because they have thus broken them ; too much out of heart to begin again. No joy ! No peace ! No power with other souls, because doubting if God has yet done anything for themselves, so far as the pardon of their sin is concerned.

For the sake of others, as well as for your own sake, I have besought you to *appropriate* this great Salvation.

But we must not stop short, even here, if our Repentance is to be deep and lasting. There must be CONTRITION, (*i.e.*, sorrow for sin,) and AMENDMENT of life.

The subject of AMENDMENT lies beyond the limits of these Lectures. All that we now attempt is—SORROW FOR SIN :—that “Godly Sorrow” which comes *after realizing God’s Forgiveness*.

Do not let Satan dishearten you : do not think that your Repentance is not sincere, because you have not yet felt the Contrition of which I am going to speak. But, on the other hand, do not rest content without it.

That Sorrow for Sin of which the Bible speaks, is something quite different from a slavish fear of judgment to come. When a man believes that he is going to die,—when the doctor tells him that before another sun has set, his spirit will have returned to God who gave it, he may shudder with fear, at the thought of the misery which awaits him. Yet there may be nothing of the “broken and contrite heart,” in that man’s experience.

Again : if he have lost his own self-respect, or the respect of the world, or if he have brought suffering on himself or his family by his own fault, he is sorry

for the *consequences* of his sin; he wishes that he had not done it. Yet there may be no thought of the GOD who has been offended—of the SAVIOUR who has been “trodden under foot!”

Real Contrition differs from natural sorrow, in that the sin is deplored *because God has been grieved*. “Against THEE, THEE only, have I sinned.” (Ps. li. 4.)

The outward signs of this Sorrow for Sin will vary, according to natural temperament. Some people are easily moved to tears. The feeling is real, but the excess in its manifestation is merely owing to temperament. Others there are, who doubt whether they have ever mourned over their sin, because they have no tears at command, and have never passed through the experience of which they read in books: inability to eat or sleep, &c., &c. This may simply result from the fact that they have temperaments which are not easily moved to demonstrations of sorrow.

If I rightly interpret your thoughts, many of you are feeling thus: “I have found out my sins, now; I see how I have wasted my life; how proud I have been; how self-indulgent, &c., &c. But—I do not feel very sorry:—not as sorry as I should feel, if the Bank had failed, or one of my children had died. When I think how good GOD has been to me, I feel that I ought to be sorry. But I *cannot* feel sorry. I know nothing of that mourning and bitterness of heart which is spoken of in Zech. xii. 10, at the thought of having ‘pierced’ my Saviour. What am I to do? How am I to gain that true Contrition which God wishes to see in my heart?”

How? In the same way as we have pointed out at each step of this Lenten teaching. By using the *WORD* of GOD, in dependence on the *SPIRIT* of GOD.

This sorrow for sin is not *natural*. No mere natural force brought to bear on us, or on our sins, can produce it. All our struggles to feel our sins, by ourselves, will end in despair. There is only ONE Who can make us mourn with true godly sorrow: He Whose office it is to bear witness of CHRIST—to reveal JESUS as He is. It is GOD the HOLY GHOST Who must produce this sorrow in us.

And the way by which He works is—by using the WORD of GOD. He has helped us already to gain a knowledge of our sins, by examining our hearts and lives in the light of that WORD. He employs the same WORD, to work in our hearts a true Contrition. He helps us to mourn over our sins, by enabling us to look at them in the light of HIS Love, as revealed in the Story of the CROSS. He unfolds to us, out of the Holy Book, the wondrous Love of CHRIST; and then He says to us: “Behold the Lamb of GOD! Look on “Him Whom thou hast pierced! See the character of “Him against Whom thou hast been sinning, all thy “life! *There* is the Being with Whom thou hast to “deal! That JESUS, Who loved thee enough to die “for thee! That SAVIOUR, Who has been watching “thee all thy life, to see if HIS sorrow would at last “touch thy hard heart!”

To this special end, HOLY WEEK is devoted.

Four times during this week, the Church repeats in our ears the Story of the CROSS. Four times over, with half-closed eyes, and listening ears, we try, like little children, in the quiet of GOD’s House, to *take in* that wondrous history which, though known from childhood, seems ever new. From each Evangelist in turn, we hear it. We follow JESUS, on that last night, as He leaves the upper room, with his eleven disciples:—we follow Him—from the golden gate of

Jerusalem—down the valley of Kedron—across that little stream—into the garden of Gethsemane. We are led on, with S. Peter, S. James, and S. John, to watch with Him, as, in that strange mysterious silence which some of you have felt in Holy Week, we almost *hear* those “great drops of Blood falling down to the ground.” Onward we go, with Him: we see that sacred Back given to the smiters—the purple robe—the cruel nails—the Cross—the darkness: we hear the awful cry: “My GOD, My GOD, why hast THOU forsaken Me?”

Then, the HOLY SPIRIT takes that knowledge of sin which we have gained in the early days of Lent, and He *applies* the awful history to each heart and conscience; He helps us to look at our sin in the light of CALVARY.

“What must SIN be”—HE whispers in those quiet hours—“what must there be in SIN, if its poison could only be healed by that Blood-shedding? And *thou* hast sinned! Thou hast found out, this Lent, it may be, hundreds of sins: and each of these sins was so dreadful, in GOD’S sight, that HIS DEAR SON must die, before that sin could be taken away!

But the Blessed SPIRIT does not leave us here. After that vision of SIN, He takes us aside, on Good Friday, and tells us, in softer accents, of the LOVE of JESUS.

“O LOVE of GOD! O SIN of MAN!
In this dread act your strength is tried;
And Victory remains with LOVE.
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.”

“Was ever Love like His?”—the HOLY SPIRIT pleads. “Was ever Sin like thine? Behold the Love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge! By that Love, measure thy exceeding sinfulness. All thy life, thou hast been sinning against this Love! All thy life,

thou hast been grieving such a SAVIOUR as this! He has seen thee a coward!—afraid of suffering for Him; giving up prayer, &c., rather than be laughed at, or lose a little of this world's money, or pleasures! 'Not this man, but Barabbas,' has been the cry of thy heart. The world, for me!—its pleasures—its popularity—its fleeting joys!"

"Year after year, this JESUS of Nazareth has passed by. Year after year, He has knocked at the door of thy heart; but He has found no entrance. There has been a welcome for earthly friends, but no welcome for HIM. Again and again, He has been wounded—pierced—crucified;—by *thee*!"

Thus the HOLY SPIRIT whispers, in the quiet hours of HOLY WEEK, till SIN appears to us—what it really is—"exceeding sinful."

Yet, instead of driving us away from Him in fear, the HOLY SPIRIT draws us nearer to the LORD JESUS. For thus He speaks to our troubled spirit: "If He 'had not loved you, He would not have been grieved 'by your sin. If He cared enough about you to be 'grieved when He saw you sinning, careless and im-penitent, surely you can trust Him to care for you 'now—*now*, when He sees you lying thus at His 'feet, wishing to repent and to walk in newness of 'life?"

It is thus that GOD the HOLY GHOST—Who is a LIVING PERSON, remember,—takes the words of the old GOSPEL, and applies them; until, by the mighty power of that Divine SPIRIT, the heart is broken—it knows not how. It has looked on HIM Whom it has pierced; and it mourns.

Thank GOD for the privileges of HOLY WEEK! They are among the many blessings of that dear old Church into which we have been baptized. Instead

of leaving you to depend on the temperament of your Clergyman, or the circumstances of your Parish at the time, the Church takes you—wherever you are—out of the din and bustle of the world, and sets the “**HOLY WEEK**” apart for this especial purpose—that **GOD the HOLY GHOST** may work in you a true Contrition, while, in sympathy with thousands of your fellow-Christians throughout all the world, you think of “**JESUS CHRIST** and Him crucified.”

Many there are, who have never known the privileges thus offered to you. Value them. Use your opportunities. Make the effort needed, according to the time at your disposal. Let this **HOLY WEEK** be set apart, as much as possible, for **GOD**.

Come and listen—every day, if you can—to the Story of the Cross. All our Church Services are so arranged as to provide the material on which the **HOLY SPIRIT** may work.

Then, after that quiet teaching in **GOD’S House**, try to follow out at home, so far as you have opportunity, what you have been taught in Church.

Do not be disheartened, if you find no Contrition at first. “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. vi. 9.) When you kneel quietly down, to think of **JESUS** and His Sufferings, say to yourself: “I am in **GOD’S Presence**,” and ask Him to pour upon you the Spirit of grace and of supplications, that you may look on **HIM** Whom you have pierced, and mourn for **HIM**. Plead that Promise. (Zech. xii. 10.) Acknowledge to **GOD** that you cannot make yourself feel sorry. Say to **HIM**: “O my **GOD**, I know that I have sinned. I have been an unprofitable servant—an ungrateful child: and yet, I cannot feel sorry! Let Thy Blessed **SPIRIT** produce this sorrow in me.”

If **GOD** gives you no sense of sorrow on that day, remember, “It is good that a man should both hope

and *quietly wait for* the Salvation of the LORD." (Lam. iii. 25, 26.) "Hold thee still in the LORD, and abide patiently upon Him," saying: "Not my will, but Thine, be done." (Ps. xxxvii. 7.)

And GOD *will* answer your prayer: probably, before HOLY WEEK is over.

How,—I know not. GOD works in various ways. Your sorrow may be like that of S. Peter, who went out and wept bitterly. I have known many a strong man weep thus. Or it may be like those who smote their breasts and returned from Calvary in mournful silence. But—in one way or another—God will certainly keep His Promise; He will take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) He will help you to sorrow for your sin, with true godly sorrow.

GOD *will* help you—doubt it not—as He helped that poor sinner in Simon's house to mourn for her sin, when first she felt the Love of JESUS, and found out, for the first time, what a sinner she was, as she realized the Love against which she had sinned.

That sorrow must have increased, as her love to CHRIST increased—as she learnt to know Him better, and watched Him sorrowing over sin, and healing them that had need of healing. It must have grown deeper, as she stood by His Cross; and deeper yet, when she entered into the presence of her LORD and of His Redeemed, and heard that "new song" in honour of HIM who had loved them and washed them from their sins in His own Blood.

So also will it be with us, if only we yield to the HOLY SPIRIT's teaching. This year, a little sorrow—the faint beginning of Contrition; next year, by the HOLY SPIRIT's help, a deeper sorrow; our hearts becoming more and more softened, as we learn more of the Love of JESUS.

Ever increasing will be that sorrow ; and ever increasing also will be the joy of knowing HIM whose Blood has washed away our sins ; till at last we enter the Kingdom of our FATHER, and there learn, for the first time, how awful has been the guilt of even one little sin of our past lives, and how unspeakable the Love of HIM who died in order that *that one little sin* might be washed away.

May the HOLY SPIRIT shew us our sin in the light of JESUS' Love, and bring out of the dreary work of Self-Examination, the quiet happiness—I had almost said, the joy—of CONTRITION !









